

Developing Field of Study Curricula

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
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Executive Summary

- This report is required by Texas Education Code, Section 61.823.
- A field of study curriculum is comprised of “a set of courses that will satisfy the lower division requirements for a bachelor's degree in a specific academic area at a general academic teaching institution.” The Coordinating Board was charged in the statute to develop field of study curricula, which include the lower-division courses in the major (exclusive of core curriculum and free elective courses) that a student would complete to be allowed to register for upper-division courses.
- As are core curricula, field of study curricula are designed to assist students by facilitating transfer of academic credit from institution to institution.
- As of December 2002, the Board has approved field of study curricula in 37 individual program areas, including business, engineering, music, nursing, and early childhood education. A complete list is provided in the report.

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The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

Introduction

The Texas Education Code, Sections 51.306 and 61.821-61.829 (Senate Bill 148, 75th Texas Legislature) repealed all earlier legislation concerning either lower-division course transfer or core curriculum. This statute continued the state-level focus on facilitating the transfer of lower-division course credit among public colleges and universities throughout the state. One of its provisions allows the transfer student to use a successfully completed group ("block") of lower-division core curriculum courses and/or a successfully completed group of lower-division "field of study curriculum" courses to substitute for lower-division course requirements in the college or university to which they transfer.

Sections 61.821-61.829 define a "field of study curriculum" as "a set of courses that will satisfy the lower-division requirements for a bachelor's degree in a specific academic area at a general academic teaching institution." The Coordinating Board was charged in the statute to develop field of study curricula, which include the lower-division courses in the major (exclusive of core curriculum and free elective courses) that a student would complete to be allowed to register for upper-division courses.

A completed field of study curriculum (FOSC) is transferable as a block, and must be accepted in lieu of the lower-division courses in the specific academic area of a student's intended "major." Students who have completed a FOSC should not be required to complete additional lower-division courses in their specific academic area, or "field of study," before being allowed to register for upper-division courses in the field of study, also known as the "major." Thus, the development of each FOSC, whether it is designed as a set of courses, goal statements enumerating desirable student outcomes, or general content areas, is critical to both the student's continuing success and the efficient utilization of state higher education resources.

When a student has successfully completed the courses that fulfill a Board-approved core curriculum and a Board-approved FOSC, the student is guaranteed that those courses will transfer and that FOSC courses will apply to the degree program to which the FOSC has been designated to apply. This guarantee goes farther than the earlier "recommended" transfer curricula previously endorsed by the Board.

Reporting Responsibility

Texas Education Code, Sections 61.823 and 61.830-61.831 (House Bill 1359, 77th Texas Legislature) amended the earlier statute regarding field of study. It required that the Board identify and approve field of study curricula for at least 10 high-demand degree programs by January 1, 2003. The Board met statutory requirements by identifying high-demand areas in October 2001 and approving subsequent field of study curricula in engineering, engineering technology, and nursing at its quarterly meetings in 2001 and 2002.

Selection Criteria for Identifying High-Demand Degree Programs

To determine which academic disciplines were best suited for the development of field of study curricula, Coordinating Board staff examined several factors to determine which degree program areas were in “high demand.”

In 1998, as part of developing a procedure for implementing the field of study curriculum legislation, Coordinating Board staff identified any general degree program areas that had produced at least 1,000 bachelor’s-level graduates for each year from 1992-1997 as a “high-demand degree program” area. Next, the general degree areas with more than 1,000 transfers from community colleges to universities each year during the same period were identified. The Advisory Committee for Developing the Core Curriculum, which was currently completing its work, and represented a broad and diverse cross-section of academic disciplines from both two-year and four-year colleges and universities, was polled for a list of those areas in which transfer presented extraordinary challenges at their institutions. Finally, the 16 academic disciplines addressed by the “Transfer of Credit Policies and Curricula of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board” (January 1988) were consulted. When the lists were compared, a dozen areas emerged that were “high-demand” degree programs with a high number of transfer students.

The final list included these general academic areas (in alphabetical order): Business (including Accounting), Communication, Computer Information Systems (CIS)/Information Technology, Computer Science, Criminal Justice, Elementary Education, Engineering, Engineering Technology, Management (within Business), Music, Nursing, and Social Work. (Social Work was later withdrawn because the national professional accreditation organization, the Council for Social Work Education [CSWE], has developed curriculum guidelines for all bachelor’s-level CSWE-accredited programs that make a field of study curriculum unnecessary for that area.)

Coordinating Board Actions

During its regular quarterly meeting on October 25, 2001, the Coordinating Board approved the formal identification of high-demand programs for transfer students, in accordance with the statute and reflecting the earlier findings outlined above. The programs and field of study areas so identified are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1.
Field of Study Curricula - Areas with Baccalaureate Graduates $\geq 1,000$
and High-Demand Programs for Transfer Students
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
(September 2001)

CIP Code	Discipline	1999-00 Grads	1999-00 Trans
09	Communication	2856	1228
0901	General	469	312
0902	Advertising	383	52
0904	Journalism and Mass Comm	914	510
0905	PR and Org'l Comm	361	75
0907	Radio and TV Broadcasting	729	279
11	Computer and Info Sciences	1348	2491
1101	General	1275	1415
000	Engineering	3110	1554
1407	Chemical	395	96
1408	Civil	442	138
1410	Electrical and Communications	831	353
1419	Mechanical	679	222
23	English Language and Literature	2344	1036
2301	General	1545	734
2310	Speech and Rhetorical Studies	512	218
26	Biological and Life Sciences	2741	2082
2601	Biology, General	1970	1798
30	Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	6733	3954
3099	Other	6259	3664
31	Parks, Recreation, Leisure, Fitness	2155	1004
3105	Health and Physical Educ	2011	956
42	Psychology	2966	1887
4201	General	2940	1861
43	Protective Services	1694	1598
4301	Criminal Justice and Corrections	1693	1435
45	Social Sciences and History	4542	2340
4506	Economics	591	189
4508	History	1141	670
4510	Political Science	1197	477
4511	Sociology	840	398
50	Visual and Performing Arts	2095	1584
5007	Fine Arts and Arts Studies	766	461
5009	Music	583	338
51	Health Professions	2925	6521
5102	Comm Disorders	387	229
5103	Community Health Serv	399	181
5116	Nursing	1437	3537
52	Business Mgt and Admin Services	12598	9408
5201	Business, General	1211	3222
5202	Business Admin and Mgt	1932	2693
5203	Accounting	2147	1043
5208	Financial Mgt	2042	439
5212	Bus Info and Data Processing	2177	731
5214	Marketing Mgt and Research	2108	402

Process of FOSC Development

FOSCs are developed in accordance with statutory requirements regarding the use and composition of advisory committees and the participation of institutions of higher education that offer degree programs that would be affected by the FOSC, as detailed in Texas Education Code, Section 61.823. The Board is directed to use advisory committees equitably composed of representatives of institutions of higher education, and is further directed to offer participation on the advisory committee for a particular field of study curriculum to each university system or institution that offers a degree program that would be affected by the field of study curriculum under development. At least a majority of the members of a field of study curriculum advisory committee must be faculty members. These provisions ensure that FOSC are developed by a consensus of content specialists and faculty members who have direct experience of transfer students within the affected degree program/s.

When a new field of study is targeted for the development of an FOSC, all institutions of higher education that offer at least one degree program in the area of the field of study may nominate faculty members to serve on the advisory committee charged with developing the FOSC. Nominations are invited by a joint memorandum from the Assistant Commissioners for the Division of Community and Technical Colleges and the Division of Universities and Health-Related Institutions, and sent to all chancellors, presidents, and chief academic officers at two-year and four-year public institutions of higher education. An equal number of representatives of two-year and four-year institutions are invited to serve on the advisory committee, which usually numbers between 14 and 18, depending on the complexity and type of individual degree programs within the general area of a field of study. FOSC advisory committees are balanced for many factors, including institutional type, size, and location; content specialties of individual members; and gender. Advisory committee members serve a term of at least two years, including an implementation year once the FOSC has been approved and implemented.

Advisory committees meet several times and together devise a draft FOSC that takes into account the curriculum standards applicable to the particular field of study. The existing transfer practices and lower-division curricular requirements of public institutions with programs in the field of study are surveyed. Any accreditation standards, licensure or certification requirements, or external quality standards are duly incorporated. Once the advisory committee has a draft curriculum, it shares the draft with each institution that offers programs potentially affected by the draft FOSC, soliciting input and feedback regarding any possible problems with the draft curriculum. Once those potential problems have been considered and modifications to the draft curriculum have been made (if needed), the advisory committee submits its draft curriculum to the Commissioner of Higher Education and to the Coordinating Board.

The Coordinating Board receives the recommendation of the advisory committee and proposes the FOSC. A public comment period follows, with the proposed curriculum distributed to all institutions for comment, and posted on the Coordinating Board website so that any potentially-affected person or organization may make comments. All comments received are brought back to the advisory committee for consideration and, if necessary, resolution. Once the comment period has ended and any further concerns have been addressed, the Board can adopt the FOSC. Once adopted, implementation is immediate, generally with a start-up year to allow institutions to modify their catalogues, for any new courses required in the FOSC to be developed and implemented, and information about the FOSC to be distributed to academic advisors and faculty across the state.

Field of Study Curricula Approved and Currently Implemented

As of January 1, 2003, the Coordinating Board has approved Field of Study Curricula for 18 high-demand degree programs for transfer students in the general areas of Business, Computer Information Systems (CIS)/Information Technology (included within the Business FOSC degree programs), Criminal Justice, Teacher Certification for Early Childhood – Grade 4; Teacher Certification for Grades 4-8, Engineering, Engineering Technology, Management (included within the Business FOSC degree programs), Music, and Nursing. Most of the general areas for which FOSCs have been developed include more than one, and in some cases many, individual degree programs, each with different lower-division course requirements in the field of study itself. An additional 14 FOSCs have also been approved for degree programs in the general area of engineering that produce fewer graduates and are not officially designated as “high-demand degree programs for transfer students.” Appendix A lists the individual degree programs that are affected by the FOSC currently approved and implemented under the direction and authority of the Board.

Field of Study Curricula Proposed and Awaiting Implementation

At the January 2003 Coordinating Board meeting (scheduled for January 30-31, 2003), the Board will consider final approval and implementation of two new Field of Study Curricula for high-demand degree programs for transfer students in Criminal Justice and Computer Science, and will propose four new FOSC for high-demand degree programs for transfer students in the general area of Communication, including: (1) Advertising/Public Relations, (2) Journalism/Mass Communication, (3) Radio & Television Broadcasting/Broadcast Journalism, and (4) General Communication/Communication Studies/Speech Communication/Speech & Rhetorical Studies/Organizational Communication. Appendix B lists the individual degree programs that will be affected by the FOSC currently proposed and awaiting implementation.

When these Field of Study Curricula have been adopted, the total number of degree programs with Board-approved FOSCs will total 37 individual degree program areas. This number far exceeds the total number of FOSCs mandated for completion before January 1, 2004, and fulfills the statutory requirement.

Plans for Developing Additional Field of Study Curricula

Although the number of field of study curricula developed by the Board has already exceeded the requirements of HB 1359, it is clear that certain additional fields of study could potentially benefit from the development of appropriate FOSCs. Increasing the number of field of study curricula for any additional high-demand degree programs for transfer students may increase the number of transfer students from two-year to four-year institutions and between four-year institutions, which, in turn, could contribute to higher graduation rates, especially in critical fields identified in the state's *Closing the Gaps* education plan.

Not all academic disciplines need to have field of study curricula. In some cases, there are very few lower-division requirements specifically in the area of the "major," the part of the degree program that FOSCs are designed to address. In other cases, like Social Work, the professional accrediting organization has set a consistent standard for undergraduate curricula, so that no additional benefit to transfer facilitation would be derived from the development of a field of study curriculum. But there are other high-demand degree programs for transfer students that are offered at more than one public university that can benefit from the development of a field of study curriculum.

Other areas targeted for the development of FOSCs include Psychology, Health/Kinesiology, Economics, Education, History, Political Science, and Sociology. Suggestions have been received from institutional representatives regarding possible FOSCs in mathematics, statistics, and biology.

Summary and Conclusion

The Coordinating Board, with the assistance of advisory committees, has developed a total of 37 different field of study curricula to date, far exceeding statutory requirements. Increasing the number of field of study curricula for any additional high-demand degree programs for transfer students may increase the number of transfer students from two-year to four-year institution and between four-year institutions, which, in turn, could contribute to higher graduation rates, especially in critical fields identified in the state's *Closing the Gaps* educational plan.

Board staff have sought to maximize efficiency by seeking collaboration from all institutions, with the goal of achieving widespread acceptance of and compliance with Board-approved field of study curricula. Building consensus during the development of a field of study curriculum is crucial to its effectiveness in facilitating student transfer at public institutions of higher education across Texas.

Appendix A

Degree Programs Affected by Board-Approved Field of Study Curricula as of January 1, 2003

Degree Programs

Any Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), or Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree program in the areas of:

- Accounting
- General Business
- Business Administration
- Business Management
- Financial Management
- Business Info and Data Proc
- Marketing Mgt and Research
- International Business
- MIS
- CIS/Info Systems

Any BA or BS degree program leading to the Early Childhood – Grade 4 teacher certification

Any BS degree in the areas of:

- Aerospace, Aeronautical, and Astronautical Engineering
- Agricultural Engineering
- Bioengineering & Biomedical Engineering
- Chemical Engineering
- Civil Engineering
- Computer Engineering
- Electrical, Electronics, & Communication Engineering
- Engineering Physics
- Engineering Science
- Environmental/Environmental Health Engineering
- General Engineering
- Industrial Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Metallurgical Engineering
- Naval Architecture * Marine Engineering
- Nuclear Engineering
- Ocean Engineering
- Petroleum Engineering
- Textile Sciences & Engineering

Any BS degree program in the areas of:

- Civil Engineering Technology
- Computer Engineering Technology
- Construction Technology
- Electrical Engineering Technology
- Electronics Engineering Technology
- Manufacturing Engineering Technology
- Mechanical Engineering Technology

Any BA or BS degree program leading to the Grades 4-8 teacher Certification

Any BA, BS or Bachelor of Music (BM) degree program in the area of music, including

- Music Performance
- Music Theory/Composition
- Music History/Literature

Any Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree program

Appendix B

Degree Programs Affected by Field of Study Curricula Developed and Awaiting Implementation as of January 1, 2003

Any Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BS) degree program in the area of
Criminal Justice

Any BS degree program in the area of Computer Science

Any BA or BS degree program in the area of Communications, including:

Advertising/Public Relations

Journalism/Mass Communication

Radio & Television Broadcasting/Broadcast Journalism

General Communication/Communication Studies/

Speech Communication/Speech & Rhetorical Studies

Organizational Communication